

NOT THE RIGHTEOUS!

ADAPTED FROM PACIFIC GARDEN MISSION'S RADIO SERIES, "UNSHACKLED!"

by Jack Odell

"For I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" Matthew 9:13

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Chapter 6

Jane " . . . despised and rejected . . ."

When JESUS said, "**O ye of little faith**," he spoke straight to the society in which we live. Faced with rising alcoholism, insanity and crime we look for human answers. The ones we find are always inadequate, simply because they are human. The churches may fail us too, not because we ask too much of Christianity, but because they expect too little of CHRIST. Perhaps the story of Jane will make it clear. It uses only her first name. You'll see why as you read.

JANE IS A SANE WOMAN, ACTUALLY AND LEGALLY. As THE OLD joke goes, she has papers to prove it. She didn't set out to be a delinquent or a psychopath, but that's what she found herself. She knows what Paul meant when he wrote, "**but what I hate, that do I.**"

There was one clear mark of trouble when she was twelve. Jane stole a quarter from her father, and her mother went into a rage over it. Many children make some small attempt at petty theft, but to Jane's mother it was a major crime. The beating was one to be remembered always. Many years later a psychiatrist blamed Jane's convulsions on an injury received that day.

Jane didn't want to be a thief or a delinquent. In fact, of all things, she wanted to take up the life of the religious.

Her mother reacted with open scorn. When Jane mentioned a calling, the mother squelched it in a hurry.

"Religious life? You're not good enough for that! Forget it!"

But the need to serve GOD stayed with her. When she was sixteen, Jane took her ambition to a clergyman.

He said, "I advise you to forget it, Jane. You're just not the type."

"But why?"

"Too independent. You'd never learn to obey GOD."

"Then," she asked, "you think I'm not good enough to serve GOD?"

"Well - if you want to put it that way, yes. You need GOD, Jane. But I doubt if GOD needs you!"

Psychiatrists have a lot to say about "rejection." So did JESUS. He said, **"And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me. But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea."**

The clergyman had evidently read neither psychiatry nor the words of JESUS. The results were tragic.

Rejected by those who presumed to speak for GOD, Jane set out to live up to their estimate.

She headed out into a round of parties and drinking and boy friends, the more the merrier. When still very young, and purely for spite, she married a much older man. The results were all that could be expected. Any moment of any day of the eight years they were married could have been described as hell on earth. Jane's temper flared high. His temper flared even higher.

He was a heavy drinker and a bitter man. Jane's nerves cried for whiskey, but there wasn't enough to deaden her misery.

She went without sleep night after night, hating and fearing her husband. And still she longed for GOD. Sometimes she lay awake for hours, crying and then trying to pray. This enraged her husband most of all.

"You're a blasted female hypocrite! If there was any GOD, the church would fall down when you went in the door!"

"But I mean it, John. I want to go to church! Our son needs to go to church!"

"No wife of mine goes to church! And no son of mine will go to church except over my dead body!"

"Why, John? Why?"

"Because churches are a lousy racket. They talk about GOD when there isn't any GOD! They're out to get rich on suckers like you!"

"That isn't so! If there weren't any GOD, why would I want to go to church?"

"Because you're nuts! You've got a screw loose somewhere!"

"But I want to go back to church!"

"You're too big a sinner to go to church. You're nothing but a rotten hypocrite!"

Scenes like that were hard for Jane, but they were completely brutal for her five-year-old son. When the shouting began, he pressed himself against the wall and watched with eyes like those of a trapped animal. By the time he was six, the boy had lost his sunny disposition. He lived more and more within himself, somber and unresponsive.

It was for the boy's sake that Jane left her husband and took the boy to live with her mother. She found a job and a tiny room for herself.

Free to attend church, she did. But there was no comfort in the service. If anything, she felt closer to GOD alone in her room than she did in the big, arched sanctuary.

Her unhappiness and nervousness grew steadily more acute. When she visited the little boy, his troubled face haunted her for days afterward. She remembers one week when she was able to sleep only six scattered hours altogether. Still she tried to keep up with her job. This was impossible in her exhausted condition, and she was fired. Three times in one year she made sincere attempts at suicide. Twice she was saved by emergency treatment. The third time she failed to take a large enough dose of poison.

Guilt settled over her. She despaired of ever finding GOD.

Her mother and a clergyman had told her she wasn't good enough for GOD. Now she told herself the same thing. And with this conviction established, she tried again to live up to the damning estimate. Jane began running around, trying to find forgetfulness in pleasure. But there was no relief; only new guilt.

Once, one night, unable to sleep, she beat on a clergyman's door. When he sleepily opened it, she burst out crying.

"Help me! Please help me!" He tried to collect his wits.

"What is it you want at this hour?"

"Peace with GOD."

"What? At this time of night!"

Jane begged, "Tell me how I can find peace with GOD. I feel so - so guilty all the time!"

The man thought of an answer. "Do you go to church?"

"I did go. But I can't find any peace. Isn't there any way I can find GOD and peace?"

By now the man had gathered his thoughts.

"GOD has forgiven worse sinners than you - when they're ready to stop sinning; when they're ready to make satisfaction for their sins. I think you have a guilt complex, but you're not broken enough yet. Come back to church when you're ready. Till then there's really nothing I can do. Now, it's late and this is most irregular. Good night."

The door closed. Jane wandered away with her burden. She was alone and helpless; unable to sleep, unable to work. Within days she was committed to a state mental institution.

There she vegetated. Her family had rejected her, and there was no one to sign an authorization for shock treatment. Jane refused to sign for it herself, so she just remained locked up. She wasn't violent, merely disturbed and helpless. Lying on her cot in a ward with other mental patients, she prayed for hours at a time.

One friend came to call on her, and during those visits they worked out a plan. The friend's husband posed as Jane's uncle and arranged for her release. The scheme was dishonest, but GOD was able to use even that for His long-range purpose.

The hours spent in rest and prayer had calmed Jane a little and she found work. Her son came back to live with her. Then she lost him again, and for three years he was kept in a juvenile home. During all that time, she paid for regular psychiatric treatment out of her small salary. She tried going back to church, but still there was no real peace. Once more she tried suicide and once more was rescued. After that attempt, she found another job and again arranged for her son to live with her. Anxious to make him feel at home and secure, she turned more and more to GOD in prayer.

When Jane had trouble getting a decent apartment in a new housing project, she couldn't possibly see the intervening hand of GOD. But the apartment she finally did get was so located that He could reach her through other people.

It was early in February of 1952 that her new next door neighbor knocked on Jane's door.

"I'm Mrs. Balker. I heard your son say your radio's burned out."

"That's right, and we miss it, too. My boy gets restless when we . . ."

"Well, now wait." Mrs. Balker was full of old-fashioned neighborliness. "We always listen on Saturdays to a wonderful program called '*Unshackled*.' Why don't you and the boy come over tonight and listen with us?"

Right then the program picked up two new listeners.

Week after week, Jane and her son heard true stories of people whose lives had been surrendered to CHRIST and who had been transformed by His power. When she lay awake nights, Jane seemed to hear those voices with their quiet, convincing testimony.

"I'm a new man - inside and out."

"I don't need to drink anymore."

"I'm free."

"I'm forgiven."

"Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Jane wondered more and more. Were these people really forgiven? They all talked as though it were so easy - just as though forgiveness was something free! She had been praying all her life - going to church, and she didn't feel forgiven at all.

Each week there was a new story of someone "*Unshackled*," and each one said the same basic thing.

"I'm at peace!"

Jane had to know more about this. There was a little church across the street, and the pastor lived right next door. Jane took her problem to him.

When she had told her story, she said, "I don't feel forgiven at all, Pastor Tyler."

"But GOD is showing you the way He can forgive you, Jane. He's moving toward you through '*Unshackled*' and Mrs. Balker."

"But I've gone to church hundreds of times and prayed my heart out . . ."

"And GOD heard your prayers, Jane. Everyone of them."

"Then why doesn't He forgive me?"

"Jane - do you know the Lord?"

"Certainly," she said. "I just told you. I've been to church and . . ."

"But do you know JESUS CHRIST as your personal Saviour the way those people on '*Unshackled*' know Him? Jane, GOD can't forgive you except through CHRIST personally."

Jane was getting impatient.

"Look," she said. "I want peace with GOD. I don't want to be converted to another religion. Religion and dogma and creeds and all those things are man-made. I want to know GOD!"

The pastor burst out laughing. Then he said, "Well, praise the Lord. You've finally seen the truth of it!"

"What do you mean by that?"

"Do you know JESUS CHRIST died for your sins, Jane?"

"Yes - I've always believed that."

"Then do you really want forgiveness? If you do, you can have it right now."

"Is it that easy?" she asked.

"Just that easy! Receive JESUS CHRIST as your personal Saviour and let Him forgive you. Let Him give you calm and quiet."

"You mean - right now?"

"Right now."

The calm and the quiet were real. For a week after she received CHRIST as her own personal Saviour, Jane walked on air. She slept peacefully and deeply every night for seven nights, the first really refreshing sleep she had known in more than fifteen years.

Then her old fears began to come back. She wondered if she really was forgiven. Maybe she was just kidding herself. She listened again to "*Unshackled*" and wondered why she didn't feel as radiant as the people on the program sounded.

Uncertain and frightened, she had to know more about this forgiveness. Next day, she wandered into the Pacific Garden Mission.

In the lobby a young nurse from the Mission Clinic spoke to her.

"Hello. Could I help you?"

"I don't know. I don't even know for sure why I came here. Except I listen to '*Unshackled*' every Saturday, and last week I became a Christian."

The nurse, Lorraine Riley, was delighted. "Why, that's wonderful," she said.

"That's what I thought too, at first. But now all the joy's gone, and I feel like nobody cares about me, and . . ."

Lorraine said, "Hey, now. Wait a minute. There's nothing to cry about. We all care about you, and so does GOD."

"But everything seems so gloomy now."

"It doesn't have to seem gloomy. But don't expect to live on a pink cloud all the time, either."

Jane sniffed, "But they all sound so happy on '*Unshackled*'."

"You mean - just before Lucille Becker starts playing the '*Lord's Prayer*' on the organ?"

"Yes - they're all so peaceful, and life sounds just like a bed of roses."

Lorraine said, "Life is never a bed of roses - for any of us. But it can be triumphant. You're just a

baby starting

out with CHRIST in a new life. But you'll find that no matter what happens, good days and bad, He always gives us the strength and the grace we need to be peaceful in the midst of all the un-peaceful things that go on around us."

"Is that true?"

"It's gospel true. And all of us here at the Mission want you to know how glad we are to have you with us - any time at all - while you're learning to walk with JESUS."

After that, Jane called often at Pacific Garden Mission.

There was always someone willing to talk over her troubles and pray with her. Sometimes it was Lorraine Riley, sometimes Elaine Chabonoff of the Women's Division. They always found time for Jane. And at last there came a day of real crisis. Jane was crying when she came to Elaine.

"I'm scared, Elaine. The psychiatrist I've been going to made me face something I just can't go through with."

"Then we'll just have to give it to the Lord. What is it you can't face?"

"I've started-having convulsions! The doctor says it's because of a blow I got when I was a child. My mother beat me for stealing a quarter."

"And what is it you can't face?"

"The doctor said I should - I should . . ." She broke off, crying too much to continue.

Elaine said, "Easy does it, Jane. Now tell me, what did the doctor tell you to do?"

"He said I should tell my mother off - write her a letter and - lay her out good for what she did!"

"Does he think that might release you?"

"I guess so. But Elaine - I can't write to her. I'm scared!" Elaine laughed.

"I'm not surprised. I'd be scared to do anything that un-Christian, too."

"Un-Christian?"

"That's right. You're a Christian now, Jane. That means that GOD has forgiven you - of everything. If you have an old grudge against your mother, you have to forgive her. All the way. No reservations. That's CHRIST's way. I think it will work much better than telling her off and hanging on to your resentment."

That wasn't so easy either. But they prayed together, and when they rose from their knees, Jane was ready to write her letter. She had forgiven her mother before GOD. Now she could reach out to her mother with that forgiveness.

The letter she wrote went a second mile. It didn't merely forgive. It asked forgiveness for all she had ever done to hurt her mother. Jane wrote and waited, but no answer came. So she went another mile - and still another. She sent three letters in all. And before writing each one, she went crying to Elaine. Each time Elaine pointed out that they had committed the matter into GOD's hands.

The third letter brought a reply. And Jane's seizures stopped!

When Jane's own story was dramatized on "*Unshackled*," she sat in the studio with her son; she a poised and cheerful woman and he a normal and friendly teen-ager. It was hard to imagine that they might have ended up a suicide and a juvenile delinquent.

Jane tells of her last friendly visit to her psychiatrist.

She says he just shook his head in wonder. He couldn't really figure out what had happened to her. But he is a sincere man and didn't even question that something had happened.

Jane says, "Now I can understand the others on '*Unshackled*.' Because I know GOD, through CHRIST, **'hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love and of a sound mind'**."

And she says, "CHRIST is all sanctity - but He is all sanity, too."

~ end of chapter 6 ~

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